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AUTHOR Bradshaw, Keith
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ABSTRACT

This report describes the results of a longitudinal study of 32 Australian children with behavior disorders who were placed in 19 regular primary schools in Victoria and New South Wales. All of these schools were in the process of integrating children with behavior disorders. In each school in the initial study, the principal, classroom teacher, parents, peer group, and support staff were asked to respond to questionnaires, interview questions, and self-report inventories. In Victoria, a follow up survey was sent to each school's principal after two years. In New South Wales, a follow up survey was sent to principals after 12 months. The results of the study indicate that 2 years after the initial survey, over 70 percent of the students in Victoria schools were no longer enrolled in their surveyed school. In New South Wales, over 30 percent of the students no longer attended the surveyed school 1 year after the initial survey. In conclusion, it would seem that for many children with behavior disorders placement in the regular school may not be the most appropriate educational placement. The factor that appeared to assist in the length of placement of the child in a regular school was a close working relationship with a special school. The effects of social, academic, and resource factors on regular school placement are discussed. (Contains 24 references.) (CR)

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THE INTEGRATION OF CHILDREN WITH BEHAVIOUR DISORDERS: A LONGITUDINAL STUDY

Keith Bradshaw
University of Western Sydney(Macarthur)

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ABSTRACT

Children with behaviour disorders have long been regarded as the most difficult group of children with special needs to integrate into the regular classroom. Despite the difficulty Government policy continues to advocate integration for all children with special needs. The present study examines the placement of children with behaviour disorders in regular schools one and two years after an initial study on their integration was undertaken. The results indicate that many of these children are no longer at the surveyed school. The results would suggest that the regular classroom/school may not be the optimal learning environment for all children with behaviour disorders.

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INTRODUCTION

Children with behaviour disorders have been regarded by researchers (Braaten, et al., 1987, Bradshaw, 1987b, Center, Ferguson & Ward, 1988, Saunders, 1987) as the most difficult group of children with disabilities to integrate effectively. Despite the difficulty involved in the education of these children, little research has taken place particularly in the area of service delivery. There have been no definite answers to questions such as which is the most appropriate integration support service or which is the most appropriate classroom environment when attempting to integrate children with behaviour disorders. This lack of clear direction has resulted in the adoption of varied, and at times conflicting strategies. The type of service offered to children with behaviour disorders to some extent depends upon where they live (Nelson & Pearson, 1991). In the United States, federal policies offer guide-lines for funding the integration of children with behaviour disorders (e.g. The Children's and Communities' Mental Health Systems Improvement Act, 1991). In Australia, however, there is no national policy on the integration of children with disabilities. Each state has developed its own policy and these policies vary considerably, as do the implications for integrating children with behaviour disorders in each of these states (Gow, 1989). Victoria and New South Wales, the most populous states of Australia, have developed two quite different integration policies and the implications for children with behaviour disorders vary quite considerably.

The aim of this study was to follow up the integration of children with behaviour disorders in Victorian and New South Wales primary schools one and two years after an original survey was conducted on their placement in the regular classroom.

METHOD

Fuchs, Fuchs, Fernstrom & Hohn, 1991 discussed the "honeymoon phenomenon" a well known initial acceptance of atypical behaviour in an integrated setting which later becomes viewed as problematic if not intolerable. To ascertain whether a honeymoon phenomenon existed in the initial study a series of follow up studies were undertaken. Data was initially gathered from

fifteen primary schools in two Australian states, Victoria and New South Wales. All of these schools were in the process of integrating children with behaviour disorders. In each school in Victoria a follow up survey was sent to school principals after two years. In New South Wales a follow up survey was sent to principals after twelve months. It is proposed that another follow-up will be conducted in New South Wales after two years and in both states after five years.

PROCEDURE

In each school in the initial study the principal, classroom teacher, parents, peer group and support staff were asked to respond to questionnaires, interview questions and self report inventories. In addition sociometric activities and observation rating scales were conducted by this writer (copies of all instruments including the follow up questionnaire, can be obtained from this writer). In the follow up study questionnaires were sent to all those principals involved in the original study.

RESULTS

The results of the follow up study indicated that two years after the initial survey over 70% of the students in Victorian schools were no longer enrolled in their surveyed school (see Table 1). In New South Wales one year after the initial survey over 33% of the students no longer attended the surveyed school (see Table 2).

TABLE 1

2 YEAR FOLLOW UP VICTORIA

Case Study No.	*School History*
1	Transferred to Special School full time - no plans for reintegration
2	Still attending surveyed school
3	Left surveyed school - home tutoring
4	Still attending surveyed school
5	Left surveyed school - non attendance at any school
6	Transferred to Special school full time - no plans for reintegration
7	Still attending surveyed school
8	Transferred to Special school full time
9	Still attends surveyed school
10	Still attends surveyed school part time placement
11	Transferred to Special school, expelled from this school, enrolled in another Special setting
12	Moved from district enrolment unknown
13	Left school - enrolment unknown
14	Left school - enrolment unknown
15	Attending surveyed school on a part time basis

TABLE 2

1 YEAR FOLLOW UP - NEW SOUTH WALES

Case Study No.	*Comments*
16	Still enrolled at surveyed school
17	Still enrolled at surveyed school
18	Still enrolled at surveyed school
19	Still enrolled at surveyed school
20	Still enrolled at surveyed school
21	Still enrolled at surveyed school
22	Expelled - Attends no school
23	Still enrolled at surveyed school
24	Expelled - Attends no school
25	Transferred to Special Setting
26	Still enrolled at surveyed school
27	Still enrolled at surveyed school with increased support
28	Transferred to Special Setting
29	Transferred to Special Setting
30	Still enrolled at surveyed school with increased support.

DISCUSSION

A number of factors indicated in the initial survey as areas of concern may help explain the enrolment patterns of these children after one or two years. These factors can be grouped under a number of headings including; social, academic & resources.

SOCIAL

In the Victorian phase of the initial study more than half of the schools surveyed indicated that they were less than satisfied with the progress made by the child with behaviour disorders in the area of social integration. This is a disappointing result if examined in terms of the Victorian integration policy which aims to increase and maintain, in relation to children with behaviour disorders, the participation of children with disabilities in the social life of the regular school. The results of the Victorian phase of the initial study support the findings of the Danby and Cullen (1988), Hornby (1992) and Lindsay (1989) all who "failed to find support for the effectiveness of integration in attaining the goals espoused in its rationale"(Hornby, 1992, p. 132). In the New South Wales phase of the initial study less than half the schools surveyed indicated that social integration was taking place. These results support the findings of Swan, Brown & Jacob, 1987 who claimed that it is possible only to integrate between one third to one half of students presently labelled behaviour disordered.

The response to the initial surveys indicated that the social aspect of the placement was seen as a concern in a number of schools. Staff in a number of schools indicated emphatically that social integration was not taking place. Despite schools indicating concern about a lack of social integration the common argument put forward by proponents of integration including teachers, psychologists and parents, is that when placement in a regular school takes place social integration occurs. There is sufficient evidence in the present study to question this argument.

Social integration is considered a critical element in any integration program (Collins, 1984; N.S.W. Department of school Education Policy, 1994) yet it appears that this social integration is not taking place in relation to children with behaviour disorders.

The results of the present study may in part be explained by Gresham (1982). Gresham argued that integration, particularly that of students with behaviour disorders, is designed around a number of undemonstrated assumptions. Gresham claimed the false assumption is that physical placement in the regular classroom will lead to increased social interaction. i.e. physical placement means does not necessarily mean social interaction. The second false assumption is that physical placement in the regular classroom will lead to these children becoming more accepted by their peers without disabilities i.e. . physical placement does not necessarily mean social acceptance. The results of the original study and the follow up study would indicate that children with behaviour disorders may well need social skills training to assist in the social integration process. These social skills may well influence the effectiveness and length of their placement in the regular school.

In the initial survey a number of interesting factors emerged concerning the school history of the children. This school history may also go some way in explaining the results of the follow up studies. In Victoria the majority (9) of the children surveyed were in only their second year or less at their present school. A small number of children (4) had only attended one other school. The majority of children surveyed have attended two or more schools in addition to their present placement. Although only in the primary grades five students had attended four or more schools. In New South Wales twelve children had been to two or more schools, five of whom had been to more than three primary schools. Absenteeism was an interesting factor in the initial New South Wales study. Eleven of the surveyed children had been absent from school ten or more days the previous year.

The type of integration program undertaken by schools may also go some way in explaining the difficulties with social integration and hence the results of the follow up studies. In the initial study fourteen schools in Victoria and eleven in New South Wales had adopted withdrawal programs for the integrated child. A number of the children initially surveyed (19) were considered physically dangerous to their peers. Due to the possibility of other children being hurt two children had their recess and lunch times changed to a different time to that of their peers. This approach may have also have made social integration difficult. Medication may have also inadvertently made the process of social integration more difficult. A number of teachers in the initial study commented on the lack of discussion between medical personnel and parents and themselves re medication. Teachers commented on erratic behaviour due to dosage/dosage changes and in a number of cases children had to be sent home at lunchtime as they were "basically unconscious" after lunch.

Academic The results of the initial study indicated that, in general, school personnel do not perceive that academic integration was taking place for children with behaviour disorders. This finding has been supported in the literature by Ruhl & Berlinghoff (1992) who quoted United States Office of the Federal Register statistics which indicated that children with behaviour problems are not performing as well as expected in the regular classroom.

Most of the children surveyed in the initial study experienced academic as well as behavioural problems, some of the academic problems being described as "Self Inflicted". Recent research (Hornby, 1992; Ruhl & Berlinghoff, 1992) has indicated that in general children with behaviour disorders who have been integrated into the regular classroom do have difficulty in the academic area. An interesting fact in the initial New South Wales phase of the study was that six of the teachers commented that the child's best subject was maths where the child often achieved at a level in advance of their peers. Generally the children surveyed in the original study performed below the level of their peers. The vast majority of schools indicated that the surveyed child had great difficulty remaining on task for any period of time.

Perhaps one difficulty in integrating children with behaviour disorders is that they usually require both intense social and academic programs and often these programs are not compatible. The incompatibility of these programs may go some way in explaining the results of the follow up surveys.

Resources The results of the initial study indicated that the schools surveyed were not totally satisfied with the level of support offered to them. The availability and supply of resources to schools may never reach acceptable levels however, the allocation of these resources to schools may well influence attitudes towards integration and hence placement duration. The visits to the schools indicated that the distribution of resources, especially personnel, appeared to be inconsistent. Integration teachers/support teachers were not employed in all schools. One Victorian school, with the need for an integration teacher, yet refused one by the Victorian Ministry of Education, had the parents' committee pay for an integration teacher. In New South Wales twelve of the schools surveyed had support teachers while only two had integration or teachers' aides employed to assist in the integration of the child with behaviour disorders. In Victorian schools the appointment of integration aides varied from school to school. In the majority of schools, integration aides were employed, varying in appointments from one to three days a week.

A number of schools were not allocated aides while others were not appointed integration teachers. In New South Wales ten of the schools had an itinerant support teacher (behaviour disordered) who, in all cases, according to the classroom teachers, visited too infrequently. Generally the staff interviewed in the initial study in both states were very critical about the lack of support in relation to departmental/ministerial support which, when forthcoming, was considered inadequate. This lack of visits to schools from departmental/ministerial support personnel was of particular concern and the most appropriate support apparently was gained from outside the department/ministry. A number of staff commented on the guidance and support gained from the integration support groups, local councils and particularly local special schools. In New South Wales a number of classroom teachers commented that they received little in-class support as the support teacher usually used the withdrawal model. On a positive note five classroom teachers considered that the relationship they had established with the support teacher was a very beneficial one, two support teachers supported these views. The role of the school counsellor was criticised by school staffs who argued that because of the number of children counsellors are required to see their results are inadequate. A number of principals from both states commented that no other children with behaviour disorders will be enrolled in the school unless services and resources improve. A number of principals (8 from Victoria & 9 from New South Wales) were concerned about the lack of resources and support from the Department/Ministry.

Other factors which may have influenced placement after one/two years include; *gender of the child* and *age of the child*.

Gender of the child In the initial study the relationship between the gender of the integrated child and the attitude of the teacher was examined by comparing the gender of the child with the teachers results on the " Attitudes towards integration of disabled children in regular classes" scale. (Larrivee, 1985; modified Center, Ferguson & Ward, 1988). No significant correlation was found between gender of the child and teachers' attitudes towards integration for either Victorian or New South Wales teachers. A possible explanation for this finding is that there were far more boys in the present study, not a significant finding as the literature (Heward & Orlansky, 1984) has suggested that in relation to children with behaviour disorders, the prevalence ratio may be as high as 8:1 in favour of males. Secondly, the size of the sample may make discriminations between gender difficult (Ruhl & Berlinhoff, 1992).

TABLE 3

GENDER/AGE OF STUDENTS IN VICTORIA

Case Study	Gender	Age
1	Male	2
2	Male	1
3	Male	5
4	Male	Prep
5	Male	6
6	Male	2
7	Male	Prep
8	Male	1
9	Female	1
10	Male	3
11	Female	3
12	Male	Prep
13	Male	5
14	Female	6
15	Female	1

TABLE 4

GENDER/AGE OF STUDENTS IN NSW

Case Study	Gender	Age
16	Male	2
17	Male	4
18	Male	3
19	Male	Kinder
20	Male	4
21	Male	3
22	Male	5
23	Male	1
24	Male	3
25	Male	1
26	Male	5
27	Male	2
28	Male	2
29	Male	4
30	Male	2

Age of the Child Larrivee and Cook (1979) discovered that teachers' attitudes towards integration tend to become less positive as grade level increases. In the initial study the grades in which the integrated child was placed were grouped into three categories; grades prep (kindergarten), 1st and 2nd were the lower division; grades 3rd and 4th were the middle division and grades 5th and 6th were the upper division. A mean score for each division was calculated using the results gained by teachers on the self report scale "Attitudes towards integration of disabled children in regular classes". The mean scores were;

	VICTORIA	NEW SOUTH WALES
Lower Division	72.1%	72%
Middle Division	75.5%	66.8%
Upper Division	67%	61.4%

These mean scores indicate support for the Larrivee and Cook result i.e. that as grade level taught increases attitudes towards integration decrease. A common theme in discussion with school personnel was the belief that the earlier in the child's schooling years the integration process took place the more chance of placement success. This view was supported in the literature (Bender, 1986; Larrivee & Cook, 1979).

School Community Links A close examination of those case studies where the child was still enrolled one and two years later was conducted. Perhaps the most important factor common to all of these cases was what this writer terms the co-operative model. Sapon-Shevin (1978) used the term "co-operative model" to describe individualised programs. Her description describes most effectively what should be operating during the integration process, particularly for children with behaviour disorders. In the co-operative model Sapon-Shevin stated that the model would make use of the positive aspects of each individual setting. In the most effective case studies regular school staff had the opportunity to visit the child in his/her previous educational setting prior to his/her enrolment at their school. In some cases the regular school was located alongside a special school. In these effective case studies the regular staff maintained close contact with the special setting and now uses the special setting as an external resource. Frequent contacts are made to discuss the child's progress, program needs and possible behavioural strategies. Gow, Ward, Balla and Snow (1988) from their national review of integration concluded that there is a major need for a co-operation between special schools/teachers and regular schools/teachers.

This view is supported by Kauffman, McCullough and Sabornie (1984) who claimed "special and regular education teachers should visit each other's classroom to observe, comparing student's behavior and curricula" (p. 207). Clearly for the effective case studies in the present research this co-operative approach is being utilised. The Department of School Education in New South Wales have recently produced a policy statement (1994). This policy states that regions will " identify existing expertise in the field to assist clusters and schools" (P. 5). It would appear that in the effective case studies the school is doing just that; it has identify expertise in the field and it is using this expertise to assist with the integration of the surveyed child. In one case study the school has a special education unit within the school grounds. The school staff work very closely with the unit staff and most of the unit's eighteen children are integrated into a regular class during some time of their school week. While the surveyed child was not integrated from the unit, rather a local special school, the classroom teacher and principal have gained much support and knowledge from the unit staff in the areas of programming and discipline. It would appear that in all of the effective case studies a special school/setting has been a valuable resource hence the implementation of a co-operative model. While each situation was unique it does suggest that, when integrating children with behaviour disorders the support of a special school, in the

areas of curriculum design, behaviour strategies, services for the child/parent and support for regular class teachers, is an important variable. The present findings support the work of Masat et al. (1980) who advocated a close relationship between the regular school and the special school. Masat and associates suggested a transitional plan involving the regular school co-ordinator and the special school co-ordinator.

Each co-ordinator has a set of clearly stated roles and a clear schedule of transition is followed. Bradshaw (1987b) also outlined a set of transitional strategies that could be followed when integrating children with behaviour disorders.

In conclusion it would appear that for many children with behaviour disorders placement in the regular school may not be the most appropriate educational placement. A number of factors, social, academic and resources, were suggested as reasons why placement in regular schools doesn't appear to last. The factor which appeared to assist in the length of placement was a close working relationship with a special school. Clearly for the education of children with behaviour disorders the regular classroom is only one option, special schools, special classes, wilderness programs, vocational programs and social skills programs must be considered. As Steinberg & Knotzer (1992) claimed the time has come to perhaps look beyond the mainstream classroom because "the evidence is accumulating that this is not a sufficient condition for ED/BD children's development" (p. 152).

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